

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

INFORMATION  
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October 7, 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

SUBJECT: Tunisian Concern over Relations with the U. S.

Secretary Rogers--in the attached memorandum--would like you to be aware of some strains that are developing in our relationship with Tunisia, a country that has your special interest.

The Tunisians are concerned over the appearance of our declining ability to meet their development and security requirements. Last September, after the Libyan coup, you indicated to Bourguiba's son, then Foreign Minister, that we would be as forthcoming as possible with economic and military assistance in view of our continued interest in Tunisia's progress and security. The Tunisians considered this a morale boost at that time. However, it is becoming increasingly evident that we may not be able to provide the \$9.2 million in concessional food sales nor provide significant additional military assistance that Tunisia requires. In fact, needs in Southeast Asia will require us to reduce our \$3.0 million in military assistance for Tunisia.

Tunisia has been a loyal companion since the beginning of our assistance relationship after their independence in 1956. The Tunisian leadership is now looking upon anticipating reductions as a precursor of a changed U.S. attitude. The Secretary feels that--despite some necessary cuts that may have to be made--it is not in our interest to convey the impression that we are backing away from our traditionally close assistance relationship with Tunisia. He has instructed Ambassador Calhoun to press home in Tunis reassurances of our interest and Secretary Rogers plans to do the same when he sees the Foreign Minister at the United Nations sessions. The Secretary also feels that it might be desirable at some future point for you to inform President Bourguiba that our reductions--necessitated by our world-wide obligations--will be kept to a minimum to account for

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our strong interest in Tunisia's development. He is not recommending that this action be taken at this juncture but wanted you to be aware that such a situation might arise.

Comment: Tunisia is an example of how the small countries often get squeezed when the high-priority ones are taken care of in our military and economic assistance programs. Also, Tunisia is a country which is broadening its natural economic relationship with Western Europe and still needs U.S. aid. The result is that the U.S. spends its money where it is more exclusively depended upon.

I share the Secretary's concern about this friendly country's receiving wrong impressions of our policy. In addition to the Secretary's recommendations I am having my staff work with State to see what else might be done.